

## PART ONE: FINDINGS

### Historic Geographic Isolation: A Pivotal Factor in the Cultural Development of the Grand Valley

Centrally located between Denver and Salt Lake City, Grand Valley growth was shaped by its geographic isolation. Because of this, its people were forced to make do with what they had. They created and grew their own institutions and gave birth to a set of strengths (next section) that are embedded in the fabric of the valley's culture to this day.

From its beginning the Grand Valley has existed in isolation on the Western Slope of Colorado's Rocky Mountains. Almost 300 miles from Salt Lake City and 260 miles from Denver, it became a logical place for a division point on the Union Pacific Railroad. While other agricultural communities were started on the Western Slope, they did not enjoy the combination of two major rivers and an intercontinental railroad to give access to major markets. Diversion canals followed the same basic east-west trend of the Colorado River and fostered the growth of specific agricultural areas.

These areas produced their own identities and neighborhoods and in the case of Fruita and Palisade, went on to become their own cities. From the beginning a neighborhood base of social organization took root in the Grand Valley. This neighborhood-based sense of place is still in evidence today. Fruita wants to maintain a buffer between itself and Grand Junction. Palisade wants to be recognized in its own right as a center for the emergence of the new Colorado wine industry. Similar stories come from the people in Clifton, Orchard Mesa, and Fruitvale.

The following sections of this report contain quotes from people we talked to along with references from books and articles that formed our findings. Quotes from individuals are italicized.

- "Soon the upstart town was on its way to establishing itself as the midway hub of commerce, health care, agriculture, and education between Denver, Colorado, and Salt Lake City, Utah." (Davis, pg. 16)
- *"We had to build our own."*
- *"Given our geographic isolation, we are known as a test market place, Could we use our isolation to built our unique future?"*
- *"I like the natural setting, active social community, and the fact that we're somewhat isolated."*

- *“In 1881, this was a division point for the railroad. It was the supply center for mining and agriculture all the way down to Ouray and Silverton.”*
- In the 1890's, Grand Junction was midway between Denver and Salt Lake City and...was inviting to all the traveling companies, because if they showed here they would not have to lose a date. Advance agents would make contracts at bargain prices to fill in the time going East or West; as a result then for 20 years Grand Junction could almost write its own contract for stage talent. (Tope, p. 54)
- Even in this world of instantaneous global communications, Grand Valley is isolated just enough to maintain its reputation for rugged Western beauty and old-fashioned agrarian values. (Couch, p. 55)
- *“Scientists from the DOE decided to stay after the Uranium Boom and Clean-up.”*
- *“Grand Junction has more airplanes per capita than any other place in the West.”*
- *“Farming in the Grand Valley is difficult because the farms are isolated from markets.”*

## **Strengths of the Grand Valley and Its Communities**

This section addresses the strengths of the people and their neighborhoods, communities and the valley. To the degree that strengths could be identified and clarified, was the degree that a clear vision statement could be made with strategies and actions that, when implemented, will naturally reinforce the strengths.

As the community evolved over time, a variety of challenges presented themselves. In the very beginning was the challenge of building a new community, and doing so in pronounced geographic isolation. The people of the valley met these challenges by employing personal and cultural strengths. Over time, as successive challenges presented themselves, strengths emerged.

Six strengths have been identified which appear to have played a major role in determining how the Grand Valley came to be the way it is today. These six are resilience, self-sufficiency, caretaking, absorption, adaptation, and stability. These strengths are directly related to how traditions, beliefs, and values for community life grow from a unique relationship to geographic place, land and water, and kinship ties. (See Figure One—the Model.)

We began to search for *when* these strengths first appeared in the culture. From the storytellers and a review of several historic documents and books we found that the geographic isolation of the original town and the character of the original settlers had embedded these strengths in the Grand Valley culture from the beginning of its settlement. Once this concept of geographic isolation was identified, we began to notice (from many conversations with people) the strengths associated with the term and noted that it appeared in many of the publications.

The strengths, discussed below, emerged out of hundreds of discussions with individuals and chat sessions in various people's homes, businesses, or gathering places. Our initial introduction to the strengths was the discussion that related to the oil shale bust, or as one person put it, "The Depression." As we listened to these stories of courage, survival, grit and fortitude the JKA team began to track various themes we were hearing back through other boom and bust times through historic storytellers in the Valley.

Out of those stories, we identified certain consistent qualities that the people of the Grand Valley came to value over time. As these qualities took on form, meaning, and definition, they were recognized as unique strengths. They continue today as the essential elements that make the Grand Valley a special place to live.

The first three strengths of Resilience, Self-Sufficiency and Caretaking are qualities that an individual possesses or absorbs from the culture once they arrive in the valley. The following three strengths of Absorption, Adaptability, and Stabilization are qualities that the communities possess and perpetuate as a part of the culture of the valley. These qualities are in constant interaction, strengthening or weakening, as the ebb and flow of change impacts the valley. They are discussed here as elements that, now recognized, can be reinforced and strengthened through vision alignment and strategic action when considering issue resolution, projects, programs and policies.

**1. Resilience.** The ability of citizens to recover their strengths, spirits and good humor quickly after the boom and bust of wild card economies is the best evidence of the Grand Valley's resilience. It became very apparent to our field team that, with each bust, the people's strengths rose to the surface making it more and more important to rely on each other for both survival and moral support, thereby re-enforcing their social capital and strengthening their ties to each other.

Businesses and people who were in many ways connected to that single dimensional economy in 1982 never anticipated the collapse:

- *"We were young hot shots riding the cresting wave of success."*
- *"When 'Black Sunday' hit and people awoke to the devastating news, the feeling was one of despair throughout the community."*

- *“We were all shocked and depressed.”*
- *“I was depressed for a very long time.”*
- *“I was sad for a long time.”*
- *“It was awful, people were completely broke.”*

For many, the measure of their devastation was the degree of the community’s lack of diversification, as echoed in these statements:

- *“We were all over extended.”*
- *“Our history has been boom and bust.”*
- *“When the oil shale bust happened, all other natural resource based economic activity caved in with it.”*
- *“Oil and Gas, savings and loans, timber and agriculture all tanked at the same time.”*

Resilience and the ability to continue in the face of difficulties is part of the valley’s history. Along with the strength of resilience runs self-sufficiency, or the ability to take care of oneself on both the individual and community levels.

**2. Self-sufficiency.** Self-sufficiency is the second strength that developed within the early pioneer culture. The settlers of the Grand Valley had to make do with whatever resources the Grand Valley had to offer them in order to survive and progress. We found a community that takes pride on having built their own infrastructure and institutions such as the intricate water canal and drainage systems, schools, Mesa State College, St. Mary’s Hospital, health services, and the regional airport, etc. The strength of self-sufficiency was reinforced through quotes like these:

- There was never a benefactor, a guardian angel, or a financial backer, not even a grub-staker. Every thing had to be fought and bled for. The pioneers built their own town, a self reliant, hardy bunch of adventurers. (Tope pg. 14)
- More than any other facet of community building, the water issue exposes the stages of the evolution from pioneer settlement to a small town. What began as a desire on the part of the settlers for fire protection and reliable domestic water supply developed over subsequent years into a vehicle for local control. (Underwood p.12)
- In the early years of Grand Junction not much cultural influence could be expected from the outside. The citizens of the 1880s had to satisfy their own

desires in art, music, drama, study clubs, scientific and philosophical studies and the library. They did help themselves. (Tope pg. 53)

- Piñon Mesa supplied timber for construction and jobs, clay was also plentiful, and by autumn 1882 several kilns fired bricks for building materials as well as employment. (Underwood, p. 29)
- *“Mesa Little League is a self-supporting program.”*
- *“As a result of the Shell oil bust, Marillac Clinic was formed by 29 doctors donating their time.”*
- *“Lots of teens work while in high school.”*

Recent years, however, have seen the influx of people moving into the valley from areas with stronger economies. This has resulted in driving up the cost of housing. Coupled with relatively low wages, the community’s capacity for self-sufficiency is in danger of eroding, placing a great deal of stress on the fabric of the informal social system. For example, the unincorporated area of Clifton has not fully recovered from the economic downturn of the oil shale bust 20 years ago. Today it presents a challenge to social service agencies and organizations that are trying to address the needs of a sector of the community that used to be self-sufficient under its own natural system.

From the roots of self-sufficiency rises the concept of caretaking, or the ways in which people look out for each other and help each other on an informal basis, such as trading childcare or mowing the lawns of elderly neighbors.

**3. Caretaking.** A natural and organic function of a healthy community is its member’s ability to care for one another. This has been a historically great strength of the people of the Grand Valley mainly due to its geographic isolation and intimacy of place. JKA found that caretaking remains a strong asset in the present day of the Grand Valley.

- *“We watch out for the kids of the neighborhood.”*
- *“There is a contrast between the depression and oil shale bust... there was more care taking during depression days.”*
- Downtown Café—*“If one of our regulars does not come in for a few days we have someone go check on them.”*
- *“This community cares about, and really takes care of, its elderly.”*
- In Fruitvale in the 1930s depression the Ancient Order of Fools, a community club, helped people over the hard times with laughter. (McCreanor, p. 8)

- *“There is a strong sense of community in Riverside. Everyone knows and takes care of each other.”*
- *“This community is marked by the willingness of people to do volunteer work.”*
- *“Kids have free run of the town.”*
- *“When I was a kid our house burned down and the community helped us out by giving us household items and clothing.”*
- *“The support system is great within neighborhoods.”*
- *“It is up to us (the retired folk) to watch out for the kids of our neighborhood.”*
- *“I’ve lived here for 24 years, and I’ve seen it over and over.”* (Reference to community support for finishing the Grimes’ house)
- Nine of ten Mesa County residents report that they have a neighbor they can turn to in time of need. (Our Picture of Health 1998, pg. 87)
- Mesa County families will have access to needed support services, such as mental health services, parent training education, child-care, and public health. (Mesa County Strategic Plan, May 2001, Issue #7 Healthy Families, Goal #1, pg. 19)

Caretaking of one another helps people to interact with others when they are life-long residents and it eases the way into the larger society for new arrivals in the area. Helping newcomers to adapt to the local lifestyle and culture is a function of absorption, a necessary component of a healthy valley.

**4. Absorption.** Absorption is the ability of the community to incorporate changes and impacts in a manner that does not result in the disruption of the natural social system. New services and industries coming into town can be brought into alignment with the strengths of the community, and therefore it is possible for them to be absorbed into the culture.

This absorption capacity is especially important in making newcomers an immediate part of the valley’s community. JKA team members found that one of the reasons for this strong absorption mechanism is a settlement pattern based on relatives following relatives into the valley. To this day the settlement pattern of newcomers moving to the Grand Valley is dominated by people who are moving to join another family member or friend already here. Once this pattern starts, other members of the family are often brought to the valley. Many people confirmed this pattern when they said things like:

- *“I moved here to help take care of my brother who’s handicapped.”*
- *“They moved here from Denver to be with her mother.”*
- *“I moved to Grand Junction from the Front Range after I retired because my nephew was here.”*

Those already living here have well-established networks of friendships, commerce, services, work, and recreation. Newcomers, without relatives or connections, benefit indirectly because this absorption mechanism is so predominant throughout the valley. The following statements support JKA’s findings:

- The affiliate network facilitated the entry of newcomers into Grand Junction’s social milieu because it introduced newcomers to a host of families. Within two years of settling, Avery and Martha Newton, for example, were linked to more than 140 other families [via their involvement in three organizations]. (Underwood, pg.106)
- *“We need to tap, absorb the talents and energy of retirees.”*
- *“Lots of early retirees in their 50’s bring money, ideas and energy; they are affluent and energetic.”*
- *“The Grand Valley is marked by young retired folks and an influx of new intellectual capital.”*
- *“People come back to Grand Junction to retire.”*
- *“I joined the newcomers club when I moved here 6 years ago and I am still a member. Some people have been members for 14 years.”*

The companion to absorption is community adaptability.

**5. Adaptability.** Adaptability is the community’s ability to diversify, incorporate and respond to shifts and changes in its external environment in order to survive and remain healthy. By being adaptive, changes that strengthen the existing community are accommodated while potential disruptive elements are rejected.

One often-understated positive effect of the oil shale bust was that it served as a catalyst for the old values and community strengths to resurface. The social networks once again became important survival mechanisms, adapting to life’s daily challenges as reflected in the following comments:

- *“This community has a tremendous ability to pull together and do what needs to be done.”*

- *“This community has always been marked by the willingness of people to do a lot of volunteer work.”*

JKA team members found that during the oil shale bust the people of the Grand Valley reinstated their social compact with each other, thereby strengthening the social fabric of their networks. This allowed them to be more adaptable and creative and spawned a keen interest in developing some predictability in their lives. Team members were told:

- *“If you want to stay here you’ll have to diversify and do what it takes.”*
- *“It is hard to create enough income to pay all the expenses so one needs to diversify and have multiple sources of income.”*
- *“We don’t want to make the same mistakes as we made in the past.”*
- *“Old orchards are being converted to grapes.”*
- *“Even the smallest of farms are looking to convert to niche crops.”*
- *“Wine is coming into its own and that’s good.”*
- *“Agriculture lands to the west are getting converted into subdivisions.”*

**6. Stabilization.** Stabilization is the dynamic process in which a community has the capacity to maintain a physical, social and economic balance in a manner consistent with its underlying culture. Stabilization is the last strength that composes a healthy Grand Valley and is composed of all the following individual strengths; resilience, self-sufficiency, and caretaking, together with the community strengths of absorption and adaptability. The presence of the other strengths facilitates stabilization. When the other strengths are absent or weakened, stabilization is difficult to achieve, maintain, or enhance.

Recent trends towards expanded niche tourism, festivals, hi-tech companies, and the emerging wine industry are enhancing the Grand Valley’s stabilization. Seen in this context, the events center currently being discussed, the emerging farmer’s market at Palisade, efforts to improve air transportation, the river park in Fruita, continued revitalization efforts by civic entrepreneurs, organizations, and governments in the downtown areas, the proposed Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program in Fruita to protect the buffer zone and agriculture, and improvements to the communities entrances represent examples of enhancements as well. Similarly, with this perspective, the Vision 2020 Project represents a major attempt at stabilization enhancement. Following are quotes that support the presence of stabilization in the Grand Valley:

- *In 1900... 48 families formed Grand Junction’s stable core. (Underwood, pg. 79-81)*

- *“Junction has just come out of the bust in the last five years.” (Stabilization is 5 years old)*
- *“The goal... is to never be an energy-dependent economy again.”*
- *“We have to make quality arguments and achieve consistency in the decisions.”*
- *“We have gone from contention to partnership.”*
- *“We need to build from within the community.”*
- *“A lot of good will was generated by preserving the school building.” (Fruita)*
- *“The vision for Fruita is to have a downtown full of business and prosperous with a bigger employment mix.”*
- *“Palisade should encourage historically-based design for new buildings and homes.”*
- *“Our future is our past.”*
- *“We need to examine our future possibilities closely and devote resources to finding out the best way to make things happen.”*
- *“Natural landscape as buffers between neighborhood instead of gates, walls, or fences.”*
- *“We need neighborhood parks and gardens.”*
- *“Instead of strip malls, we should have culturally reflective plazas conducive to human interaction.”*
- *“Use the 2020 Vision as a basis for developing long-range strategy and for policy-making.”*
- *“This community needs to get amenities in place that will allow it to keep pace.”*

## PART TWO: RECOMMENDATIONS

### Strategies

JKA discovered five strategies that people have used or recognized as important to their stability. The five strategies are: honor civic protocols, build capacity, develop social capital, enhance diversity and ensure predictability. There are other strategic categories that can be added to this list, but from the JKA's team experience in the field, these were selected for their importance, clarity and manageability.

Strategies are the means by which action is carried out. Strategies must be used intentionally and consciously to produce the action that is beneficial to the Grand Valley and its individual towns and communities. The strategies discussed below are designed to enhance the strengths and the vision and set the stage for the following section, Alignment Actions. Five key strategies are discussed. When used as a guide in decision-making, whether individual, neighborhood, corporate, governmental, organizational, or community, these strategies produce action that is healthy and appropriate for citizen empowerment.

These strategies should be sequential in application, that is, there are civic protocols that need to be honored in order to develop a cooperative spirit; citizen, business and governmental capacities to be built in order to resolve the existing issues; and consideration made as to whether the action builds social capital, enhances diversity, and ensures predictability. The first three strategies are building blocks. The remaining two strategies, enhance diversity and ensure predictability, are key to making decisions that increase participation and ownership in civic life by the people in the Grand Valley.

The definitions of each strategy and their uses follow.

**1. Honor Civic Protocols.** A civic protocol is the respect people assign to the geographic area within which they live or the courtesies of precedence that people assign within their culture. Hence, respecting cultural values is a function of civic protocol. A protocol is place-based and is created and owned by the people of that place. Civic protocols are often violated when people unfamiliar with the local culture view this world from their perspective and self-benefit rather than from the perspective of the people who "own" the protocol.

When a protocol is violated opportunities for further interaction and cooperation are tainted, limited or sometimes even destroyed. This is a subtle process but one that has critical importance in freeing the local communities to participate in carrying out the 2020 Vision of the Grand Valley. The beginning point for civic protocol work is recognizing that people, due to their experience in their own neighborhoods and

communities, have organic knowledge about what has worked, what does work, what will work, and what they consider as belonging to them.

It is essential for each community to be recognized for what they prize in order to give them credit for their accomplishments. Following are three quotes on civic protocol violations:

- *“There is resentment that the Grand Junction Chamber of Commerce markets ‘our’ wineries but they are all located in Palisade.”*
- *“In a community planning competition in Japan, the City of Grand Junction showcased the 7<sup>th</sup> Street historic neighborhood and they weren’t even responsible for making it happen.”*
- *It’s funny that Grand Junction capitalizes upon, and advertises, wineries and dinosaurs when it actually doesn’t have either in its limits.”*

These quotes do not reflect truth or fact, they simply reflect a civic protocol violation that has caused ill feelings and prevents the ability to move to cooperative levels of action necessary to realize the concept of the Grand Valley as a community in its own right. Many civic protocol issues could be solved if “The Grand Valley” was recognized in promotions as the umbrella for all of the diversity, natural wealth, wines, fruit, recreation, vegetables, events, and agriculture endeavors with each community being credited for its unique contribution to the whole.

To move to other strategic levels, the question should always be asked: “What are the potential and real civic protocols that this action will affect and who should I contact to deal with the protocol issues?” The operating principle is to recognize that people have a special relationship to their community of place and this relationship, over time, establishes protocols that must be honored by outsiders. When civic protocol issues are eliminated it is then possible to move on to building capacity.

**2. Build Capacity.** Capacity is the ability of individuals, networks and groups to create, participate in, and absorb events that affect one’s life. Capacity has several dimensions including social, cultural, economic, political, physical, and natural. Building capacity recognizes that people and their institutions are at different stages of development with different potentiality for dealing with change in their environment. If the change is positioned to work with the people then a growth situation is developed that fosters the ability and confidence of the citizen to handle more and more complex tasks.

Eventually the capacity is reached wherein citizen ownership of the project/action is accomplished through cooperative endeavors with governments and other entities and is at a stewardship level. A good example of this is the Riverfront Parkway Project that established a greenbelt and trails along the river and is a source of pride for the entire valley. At this level, government, entrepreneurs, and

organizations take on a facilitative function assisting the citizens through face-to-face interaction and appropriate resource support to reach higher and higher levels of self-sufficiency.

The Riverside Community is an example of citizens who are building their capacity to control events in their community while the case of the Little Park Road residents busting a meth lab in their neighborhood is a good example of people who have built their capacity to control events that affect them.

JKA team members found that when citizens in the Valley sensed that they were being done “to” or “for” rather than “with,” resentment and sometimes a victim identity took over. Victimization allows the individual or group to place the blame for their circumstances on someone else, generally government or industry, thus arresting the citizens’ potential for continued capacity development. Actions that take place within this framework eventually lead to a “disconnect” between the citizens and their government, substituting anger for cooperation with both losing capacity-building opportunities.

Quotes from people associated with building capacity include:

- *“The Economic Development Council is privately supported and has brought in 37 new companies and 1,600 jobs some paying \$40,000 plus a year.”*
- *“We need some assistance to turn the canal roads into bike paths.”*
- *“River Park could be the most important thing Palisade has ever done if we do it right.”*
- *“The EDC has a program for existing local business to help retain them in the community.”*
- *“We did the homework and the Sheriff helped us shut down a “meth” lab in our neighborhood.”*
- *“This Valley has more volunteers running programs than anywhere else I have ever been.”*

Maintaining a proper sense of scale is important for building capacity to absorb the events that are more and more becoming an economic engine for the valley. For instance, Fruita is in the early stages of developing capacity for handling larger events that support the social/cultural structure of their town. An example of building capacity is the Slick Rock Trail in Moab, Utah that is now at full capacity after 20 years of growth and is worth \$8 million per mile to the local economy. As one citizens stated, “It is important for the valley to ‘grow into these events’, so we learn how to manage them in a manner that does not destroy our communities”.

The strategic questions are: How can we insure that capacity-building takes place when projects are decided upon and implemented? Are the people being impacted participating in the decisions that affect them? Consideration must be given when making a project/action decision that increases the capacity of the citizen to do for themselves and for their community. When this happens the community moves into developing its social capital.

**3. Develop Social Capital.** Social capital is the continued accumulation of public good that results when citizens engage the events and issues that surround them in a manner that produces confidence, caretaking, equity, choice, relaxation, and cohesiveness through face-to-face interaction. Social capital creation depends on a cultural sense that there is a community life, as well as private life, and that people are the capital and number one asset of the community. Large amounts of social capital were generated during the hard times after Exxon pulled out of Grand Junction when oil shale went bust.

Numerous informal gatherings and gathering places such as coffee shops, restaurants, beauty shops, bars, sale barns, farmers markets, festivals, neighborhood parks, little league games, human landscapes, and valley events are essential for the informal interaction necessary for social capital growth. To the degree that these places are accessible on foot, by bicycle, or within 15 minutes increases the interaction and time necessary to “grow our social capital.” In the Grand Valley, JKA found that there is an engaging and sustaining public life that supplements and complements home and work routines.

JKA team members have interpreted (from a historic perspective) that the social capital development in the Grand Valley is based on the isolated nature of the valley’s beginnings and its agricultural origins. The continued and sustained presence of agriculture - where cooperation, face-to-face relationships, volunteerism and caretaking are essential to agricultural operations - has seen many of these social capital values take root with the non-agriculture publics in the valley.

There is a sense among many residents that the social capital values present in the Grand Valley are threatened. As one citizen pointed out, “What I have seen over the past 20 years is that this is essentially an agriculturally-based valley that is having more and more urbanization values forced upon it.”

Other quotes that relate to social capital are as follows:

- *“Instead of strip-malls we need to build culturally reflective plazas conducive to human interaction.”*
- *“Our valley needs to be tied together with bike paths going east and west.”*
- *“Avoid developments that favor isolated family living.”*

- *“ Old timers on fixed incomes should be able to stay in their own homes and not forced out because of property tax increases.”*

As a strategy, decisions about landscape changes and human activity should focus on addressing the elements that increase the face-to-face interaction necessary to recover, maintain or enhance the community's social capital. For example, Portland, Oregon recently outlawed “snout” houses, those that are dominated by garages in the front, because they are associated with higher levels of crime. Instead, residential architecture that promotes sociability among neighbors, such as porches, is more desirable.

High levels of social capital reduce the need and cost of government having to run programs “for” its citizens. Low levels of social capital increase conflict, anger, stress, abuse, crime, mistrust, and taxpayer expenses. The operating principle is that governments, developers, new businesses/industries, and other change agents need to focus on how to make decisions that increase the levels of social capital that exist in the Grand Valley today.

As a special note on social capital, JKA found that when an individual had an issue that impacted their survival or neighborhood culture and they organized their networks to fight for their issue they have generally won. It is the same pattern the civic entrepreneur uses to accomplish projects that are beneficial to the health of the valley. The importance of this discovery is that the individual with a public purpose (social capital) is still highly respected, effective and relied upon for many of the positive changes that take place in the valley.

From developing social capital we move on to enhancing diversity.

**4. Enhance Diversity.** Healthy diversity increases the quality of choices and options that people have within their environment. Three main types of diversity were found in the Grand Valley. They are: (1) social, which insures the presence and therefore interaction with people who bring a special quality to the community; (2) economic, which ensures that there are opportunities to function at one's full potential; and (3) natural, which provides various landscape forms with which people can interact through work and play. Social and natural diversity broadens perspective while economic diversity encourages entrepreneurship and freedom to choose.

There is an overwhelming sentiment within the valley that diversity of the social and economic systems is critical to preventing the “wild card” (uranium, oil-shale) economies from ever again dominating the culture and life style choices of the people. Diversity is the safety valve that ensures choice and opportunity for many of the young people who want to stay in the valley or return to it, narrows the gap in what has become known as the “livable wage” issue, and enhances the opportunity for the new settlers who are coming into the community with intellectual, family and

material resources, to become an immediate and beneficial part of the Grand Valley community.

The economic engines of the valley are therefore ones that broaden opportunity (hi-tech, manufacturing), act as magnets for other high quality businesses (health care), does not bring in or encourage businesses that generate an over-abundance of low paying jobs (service/retail sector), contribute to the stability of the fixed income citizens (elderly), can expand on a proven track record (agriculture), provide intellectual capital (college), have low impact on the infrastructure and natural setting (festivals and events), and provide equitable and quality services for these economic opportunities (bankers, insurance, etc.).

The following are quotes associated with enhancing diversity:

- *“Hopefully cultural differences will be totally accepted.”*
- *“Prime riparian habitat along the river, once it goes, is gone forever.”*
- *“Diversification is the key to economic vitality and preservation.”*
- *“We built a strong, diverse economy since oil shale.”*
- *“We are much more buffered now.”*
- *“Things don’t get ugly here when people have different political views. The churches work together despite philosophical differences.”*
- *“There is a huge variety of income levels and architectural diversity in the neighborhoods and this makes it difficult to draw battle lines between people.”*
- *“In 1900 almost one third of the Grand Junction work force was on the railroad payroll.” (Underwood, p. 32)*
- *“Provide appropriate housing for the elderly, single parents, and low income families.”*

When making decisions the decision-makers should ask the question: Does this decision enhance diversity in the neighborhoods, community, and valley in such a manner that the change will contribute to improving the elements that provide for a better quality of life for the citizens? The important thing to remember is that diversity honors the strengths of the people of the valley.

**5. Ensure Predictability.** Predictability is the ability to anticipate and plan for the future. This strategy is imbedded in the consciousness of people of the Grand Valley because the collapse of oil shale in 1982 had such a devastating effect on the peoples’ and institution’s abilities to control events. Even recent newcomers have

picked up the stories of the collapse and have incorporated its effects into their conversations. This 20-year-old event is still present in talk as though it were yesterday. Loss of predictability creates feelings of powerlessness, withdrawal, depression and anger.

People in the Grand Valley, have a conscious desire to be able to live in an environment that has predictability about the present and future. Predictability we found generally meant that if a change is to occur they want to be in on deciding how that change can improve upon their life qualities. Being surprised or worrying about being surprised was a fear that made life unpredictable for many citizens. "What do you think they will do next," was an expression of fear of the unknown or of random actions that they could not track in making their world unpredictable.

Below are three examples (out of many) of predictability that people want to see continue:

(1) People talked about being able to get from home to work and to the mesas within a 15-minute time frame. That time frame is symbolic as to the quality of life that the people value: everything is accessible within a time frame that allows time for self, family, and friends rather than sitting in a car. Events and decisions that affect that time frame will begin to erode predictability, weakening the ability of people to maintain harmony and intimacy with their environment. One citizen called it the "urbanization of our rural values."

(2) An important part of life in the Grand Valley is the continued existence of agriculture. It was agriculture that allowed the survival of the valley from isolation through depressions and hard times. It is built into the community psyche as being essential to the lifeblood of the valley. Even newcomers absorb this value although they have no apparent reason to do so. While there is also a value for open space, people are clear about the difference. Maintaining viable agriculture has some type of survival or organic quality tied to it and is passed on to new arrivals, while open space is seen as a critical enhancement of the natural wealth that makes this geographic area unique.

(3) Many people expressed the desire to see that the BLM lands in the Grand Valley are taken out of disposal or development scenarios and placed into amenity management, protected forever as a part of the natural wealth of this valley.

Quotes associated with insuring predictability heard from the people:

- *"Transfer Development Rights purchased in the buffer zone (Fruita) will help insure the presence of agriculture lands."*
- *"We don't want to make the same types of mistakes we made in the past."*

- *“Inconsistency must be removed from the daily interaction between people and their governments.”*
- *“Agriculture helps keep a family-oriented, community feeling alive.”*
- *“Child and migrant services worked with the State Department of Local Affairs to build on-site farm worker housing in Palisade.”*
- *“An agricultural experiment station is working on what and where to farm.”*

When decisions are made, people want their ability to have a predictable environment ensured. The question becomes: How are decisions made that reinforce predictability within the neighborhood, communities, and the valley? The operating principle to bear in mind is that people will have predictability if they can participate in the decisions that affect them, be able to track those decisions to implementation, and participate in the implementation.

## **Alignment Actions**

In developing the Model, the third major leg in the triad is Action. It has become apparent from our fieldwork that the vision process could benefit from an action component. The action component, described here as Alignment Actions, provides a road map for getting from here to there - setting the stage for implementation. Hence, strategies were developed to illustrate the broad road map and directions that are necessary to implement the vision. Since strategies are not self-executing, an action component was needed. This is where, as the saying goes, “the rubber meets the road.” Vision and strategies represent intention while action is carried out in the form of issue resolution, projects, policies, and programs.

The Grand Valley will be most successful in realizing its vision when there is alignment between intention and action. Using four action levels discovered during the fieldwork, and presented below, can facilitate alignment of intention and action in achieving the Valley’s 2020 Vision. The action levels are:

1. Remove barriers: pick the low hanging fruit, thus freeing energy;
2. Generate momentum: support citizens in resolving issues;
3. Engage: provide opportunities for involvement and participation through cooperative and collaborative efforts; and
4. Integrate: citizen ownership through stewardship activities.

**1. Remove barriers: pick low hanging fruit.** In this land of orchards, the concept of “low hanging fruit” takes on a new meaning in the context of this visioning process. Low hanging fruit refers to relatively straightforward issues that have not been taken care of in the normal course of events, usually due to some minor bureaucratic entanglement, and have thus become the focus of citizen frustration.

These issues tend to grow in their perceived importance, along with a feeling of being slighted, until they consume much of the citizens' mental and emotional energy.

The result of this energy block is that when a larger, more immediate issue arises that needs citizen attention, they are unable to participate constructively in its resolution because they are still "hung up" on their previous issue. Often, when the citizens are asked for their input in focus groups or public hearings to deal with a large issue they show up with a list of gripes and belligerent attitudes that are counter-productive to resolution. We refer to this phenomenon as "issue loading," or negative emotions surrounding an accumulation of unresolved issues. The citizens may vent their frustrations temporarily but both the previous issue and the larger issue remain unresolved. After such occasions the City Council or County Commissioners are left with a feeling of having been verbally and emotionally assaulted in addition to their frustration with not being able to effectively gain public input to address the issue at hand.

Our conversations with citizens throughout the Grand Valley indicate that the people do not necessarily want the local governments and organizations to do things for them but, rather, to help them do things for themselves. This reinforces the old saying that compares the merits of giving a man a fish to eat so he will have food for the day or teaching him to fish so he will have food for a lifetime. Many Grand Valley citizens, probably due to the historically rooted strength of self-sufficiency that is so dominant in this area, want to be able to say that they had a little bit of help but they mostly did it themselves.

During our conversations with people we were presented with many examples of low hanging fruit, or opportunities to clear up an issue that is blocking citizen energy. These opportunities range from installing simple traffic calming devices on various residential streets to more involved government facilitation with neighborhood groups. Here are a few briefly explained examples of how the City and County can pick some of the low hanging fruit:

- 1) Assist the Parkwood Estates neighborhood to get a picnic table for their local park;
- 2) Post signs allowing no truck traffic through the historic district on 7<sup>th</sup> Street;
- 3) Provide better traffic light management on the 5<sup>th</sup> Street bridge, especially during the morning commute;
- 4) Work with citizen groups to change the canal roads into bike and pedestrian paths;
- 5) Assist the residents with the placement of the Riverside School on the state and national historic registers and help the Riverside community obtain ownership of the school and proper permits to rehabilitate the structure for use as a community-wide resource center; and
- 6) The Visitor and Convention Bureau can resolve civic protocol issues with Fruita and Palisade regarding its marketing of dinosaurs and wineries as

being under Grand Junction's purview in order to move on to more cooperative ventures.

Working with citizens to resolve issues such as these will reduce the number of disruptive public meetings and make for a much more relaxed and productive atmosphere anytime people and their governments interact or get together. Picking the low hanging fruit will also ensure that citizen energy is available for addressing other issues of significance when they arise.

**2. Generate Momentum: support citizens in resolving issues.** In conversations with Grand Valley residents we became aware that they have issues in various stages of development. The first stage of issue development is referred to as "emerging." This is when something has happened or a concern has arisen and people are talking about it amongst themselves but no demands or requests have been made to an organization or government entity. An example of an emerging issue is the resentment of some lifeguards at the Orchard Mesa Pool feeling that they are babysitters. Currently, some parents are using the pool as a daycare center at a cost of \$2.75. Involving the parents in resolving the issue while there is still flexibility in the formal system will keep this emerging issue from becoming disruptive.

The second stage of issue development is "existing." At this stage, an issue is not only being discussed in the informal networks but it has also been brought to the attention of governments or organizations through a demand that formalizes the issue. In many cases, initial activity has begun to organize to make something happen. An example of this is the expressed need for indoor recreation facilities for youth and adults. In this case, the issue has been in and out of the public spotlight for about 20 years. It is once again gathering momentum and support from the public and public figures.

As an important note, when talking to valley residents, many of them have expressed that they would like several smaller recreation centers around the valley, not just one big center as is currently being proposed. The residents believe that many of the recreation centers' users would be children and youth whose use of the facility would be assured if they were able to walk or ride their bicycles to the center nearest them.

In the third level of issue development, "disruptive," the issue has reached the point where citizens and their governments are distrustful of each other and often alienated, not only from each other, but also within their own groups regarding the proper course of action. In our conversations with people around the Grand Valley, we were continuously told about strife with, or perceived ineptitude of, the local governments. People gave many examples of what we are calling the "disconnects" between the local governments and their citizens, between the local governments themselves, between the local governments and their own planning staffs, and between the planning staffs of the local governments.

Even if the disconnects do not actually exist, there is a perception on the part of the citizenry that they do exist and this is just as damaging. The challenge in this situation is that people react and adjust to situations in real time while it takes institutions much longer to alter their course of action to align with the citizens' issues. This sets up the gaps between people and their governments that cause disconnections.

The optimal action for building positive momentum is to catch and deal with issues at their emerging or existing stages in the informal systems to help the citizens resolve their own issues. This usually calls for some level of government facilitation and manageable expenditures. When the momentum is encouraged and aided by government the people know they are taking charge of their own destiny and they perceive government as a facilitator and responsive to their issues.

According to Valley residents, following are some examples of how local governments can generate momentum on several emerging and existing issues:

- 1) Support citizen efforts to beautify and make more prominent the entrances to Grand Junction from the south on Highway 50 and coming from the west on Interstate 70;
- 2) Help citizens make the I-70 exit to Palisade more attractive;
- 3) Work with citizen groups to protect the fragmented lands on the slopes of the Grand Mesa where the City owns property as part of its watershed;
- 4) Facilitate efforts by local non-profit land conservation organizations to develop TDR and other conservation tools to conserve the Grand Valley's natural wealth and agriculture;
- 5) Work with the school district to procure a location and access to school impact fees and other funding for a new elementary school in Fruita; and
- 6) Resolve current situations in which students in Orchard Mesa are bussed to two different high schools, thus interrupting relationships they have established during elementary and middle school years and putting them in uncomfortable adversarial roles.

**3. Engage: citizen participation through cooperative endeavors.** Cooperative endeavors are a level of action where different entities can be more effective by working together rather than separately. The cooperative endeavor requires a level of trust with each entity producing their share of the action decided upon. These endeavors may be between citizens and business, from business to business, government and citizens, etc.

There are several good examples of how citizens, organizations, businesses, and governments have worked together in cooperative endeavors. Both city employees and residents of Fruita spoke glowingly about last year's Bike to Work Day in which the mayor "drove" a tandem bicycle and residents could sign up to be picked up from their homes in town and brought to work. This was a joint effort

between the local bicycle shop and the Fruita City administration. The bicycle shop offered discounts on bicycles and equipment and local vendors provided free drinks and snacks to bicycling commuters. It was a fun day for everyone involved. There are often unanticipated benefits from cooperative endeavors. In this case, the mayor hadn't been on a bicycle for years and had such a good time that he bought a bicycle from the local shop.

Back in 1974 residents of the historic neighborhood on 7<sup>th</sup> Street decided that they wanted to replace their existing street lamps with reproductions of the original street lamps that had been removed in 1934. They approached the City with their idea and agreed that the neighborhood residents would raise the funds to purchase the lamps and the City would provide in-kind labor to install the lights. Again, there was an unexpected development in that the City bought bulletproof globes for the lamps. The residents we talked to still speak highly today of the success of this cooperative endeavor that involved so many people.

If you are a person with limited income and/or special needs, the Grand Valley is a good place to be. The different social service providers have spent a lot of time and energy to reach a high level of cooperation among themselves and with the area's first-rate medical facilities. They share resources and information to give high quality service to their clients.

According to discussions with Valley residents, following are some current examples of issues that could benefit from cooperative endeavors:

- 1) The community and Mesa State College working together to help MSC make the transition from a college to a university, complete with research capabilities;
- 2) The community and appropriate government entities collaborating on getting an events center for the community that will draw people from all over the Western Slope, if not the entire state, for entertainment purposes;
- 3) Local businesses and appropriate government entities working together to implement a livable wage for residents of the Grand Valley, a wage that is on par with housing prices and the cost of living;
- 4) Citizens, government, and local businesses working together to revitalize air service to Grand Junction; and
- 5) Local businesses and governments working together to create and sustain vital, dynamic downtown business cores.

While these five items were mentioned in virtually every chat session, there are many more cooperative endeavor opportunities that can, and should be, undertaken.

**4. Integrate: Citizen ownership through stewardship activities.** From this point, the government's role and the citizens' energy naturally feed into an integration function in which there is citizen ownership of long-term stewardship activities

After citizens and governments have been mobilized into action around resolving an issue it is often best for the governments to let go of the project and participate only in a monitoring and advisory role. Having been involved in the process of issue resolution since its inception, citizens usually take it upon themselves to maintain the results of the action. Stewardship results when people take care of or maintain a place or program long after the end result has been achieved. This is due to the ownership in the project that they have developed over time. If done correctly, the governments should have a relatively easy time letting go of the project if they have maintained their role as facilitators.

There are some existing projects/activities that have reached this stage of development. People spoke to us with pride of the Riverfront Parkway, the preservation of the historic homes on 7<sup>th</sup> Street, and the Art on the Corner program. Even people who did not take part in bringing these projects to fruition pointed them out to us as being things in Grand Junction of which they are proud.

Further afield, there is a stewardship process ongoing in the Bangs Canyon area. Concerned citizens got together with the Bureau of Land Management when the citizens heard that the BLM was going to dispose of some land in Bangs Canyon. The citizens convinced the BLM to retain the property and worked with ATV recreationalists and other groups to resolve problematic issues such as litter, off-trail riding, gates not being left as they were found, and trespassing on private property. They made improvements where necessary and educated their memberships about the process. The groups continue to meet regularly.

The skateboard park in Palisade is a fine example of citizens working with their local government to establish a recreational facility for area youth. A local teenager went to the town council with an idea for a skateboard park. He identified a location for the skateboard park, gathered local support, and received help from the town to secure GOCO funding to build the facility where it would be accessible to all. During the process there was some initial resistance from neighbors across the street from the skateboard park but with input from the local police the residents came to realize that they would be able to keep an eye on the park and could help to keep it a safe place for kids to get together and have fun, which is, in fact, exactly what the park is today.

In Fruita, the owners of the local bicycle shop and many avid local mountain bicyclists have been instrumental in developing a nationally recognized mountain biking area north of town on 18 Road. The recreation area is on BLM land and bicyclists often share the terrain with grazing cattle. The owners of the bicycle shop have worked hard to get the BLM to designate a camping area and this has improved what was previously a deteriorating situation. The local mountain bikers and the Fruita city government are working together to create a recreation area that is challenging and sustainable. They want to prevent Fruita from becoming “another Moab.”

These examples of integration or citizen stewardship represent elements of the most efficient and effective form of governance that will be in place by the year 2020 in the Grand Valley.

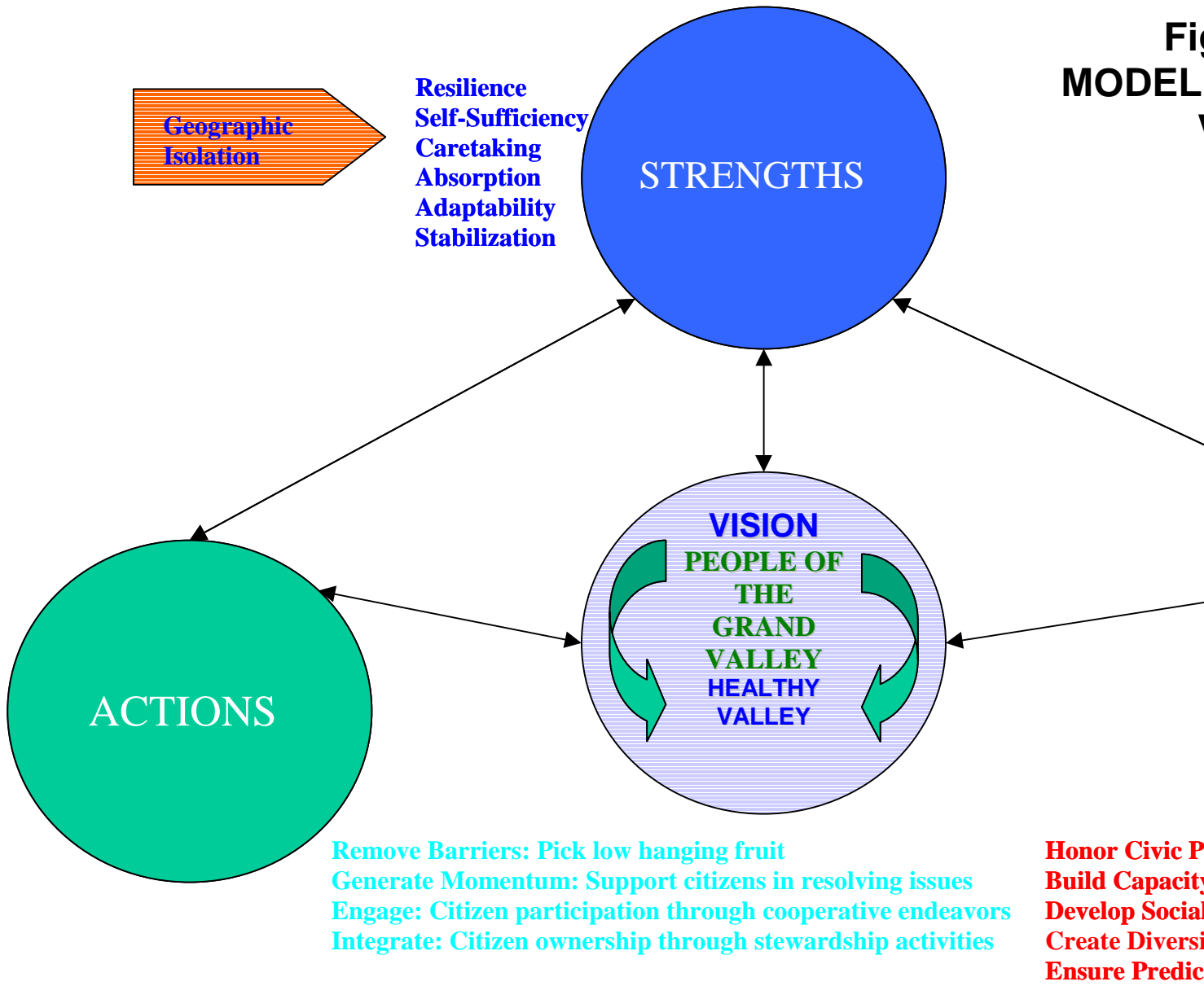
## **The Model as a Summary of the Process, the Findings and Recommendations, and the Vision Statement**

This model encompasses the story of a community born out of geographic isolation. The Grand Valley has developed its own special strengths and characteristics that have enabled it to grow and prosper in the good times and to survive the challenges of bad times.

JKA has developed a model (Figure One) that captures the essence of how the Grand Valley evolved, its strengths, and the strategies and actions necessary to achieve the 2020 Vision. Successful realization of the vision is based on employing the cultural strengths and elements of civic character that have been, and continue to be, unique to the Grand Valley. This model is specific to the Grand Valley. It is not something that has been pulled off the shelf and applied here in a cookie-cutter fashion. The six strengths are key to the Grand Valley model, developed during the course of this work, and are more fully discussed in Part One.

In addition to the diverse human resources that have been a factor in the Grand Valley's history, abundant natural resources have also shaped local events. Coal, uranium, and oil shale have all, at one time or another, figured prominently in shaping the valley's economy. The Grand Valley has seen its share of boom-bust cycles. While the Great Depression certainly had a major impact on people in the Grand Valley, even more devastating was the effect of the oil-shale bust in 1982. It is hard to overstate the impact that this event had on people and life in the valley. The suddenness, finality, and impact are still sharply etched in the memories of those who were here at that time. Once again, people had to reconnect with the strengths that had helped them weather the storms of earlier hard times.

These strengths and qualities have combined over the years to create a vibrant, healthy valley. While some citizens expressed concern over how things might turn out by the year 2020 (sprawl, pollution, crime, congestion, and poor economy) there is, nevertheless, an underlying spirit of optimism, willingness, and commitment to create a healthy, safe, economically vital, environmentally respectful, diverse, and diverse future. Such a future needs the involvement, commitment, and contribution of all citizens and residents within the Grand Valley.



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The Valley's strengths will need to be coupled with its Vision to produce the desired future. When this happens, a community has *stability* that is built upon its strengths. One very important by-product of this linkage is that it creates an environment in which it is possible for civic entrepreneurs to thrive. Civic entrepreneurs are those people within the community who chose to become involved in issues or projects because it is the right thing to do or because they have a passionate interest in making a contribution. They operate as follows:

1. They see an issue that needs to be addressed;
2. They recognize that its solution will improve the quality of community life;
3. That issue becomes the focus of their effort.

Civic entrepreneurs don't become involved because they are seeking power, nor do they become involved for self-promotional benefits. They are concerned citizens who bring an entrepreneurial approach to a civic project, thus increasing the quality of community life, i.e. social capital, within the valley.

It is crucial that civic entrepreneurs be included in developing strategies to evaluate future courses of action. Developing effective strategies will be necessary to achieve the 2020 Vision (see Figure One). JKA discovered five strategies that people have used or recognized as important to gaining stability:

1. Honor Civic Protocols;
2. Build Capacity;
3. Develop Social Capital;
4. Enhance Diversity; and
5. Ensure Predictability.

Consideration of these strategies forms the set of criteria by which a proposed action, project, policy, or program can be evaluated.

Once Strategies have been developed, the community leadership, both formal and informal, will need to insure that community intentions are in alignment with community actions. To this end, it was found that a number of neighborhood-level issues exist which, as yet, are unresolved and inhibiting the implementation of necessary actions. The solutions to these citizen and neighborhood-level issues are not complicated. They are straightforward and relatively easy, both in cost and effort, to resolve. Resolving these issues creates opportunities for collaboration, building social capital, and citizen empowerment. In other words, they are the "low hanging fruit" that can be picked without much effort while creating abundant returns.

Solving these issues will have the effect of removing barriers and obstructions that have citizen energy bottled up, leaving the formal system unworkable for them. Our experience indicates that when citizens find the system unworkable, resentment and ill will follow. Resentment replaces action and responsible involvement. Thus, barriers are created to

achieving other, more far-reaching goals of the community. When citizens are involved with government to successfully remove these barriers, energy is released for resolving successive issues. Success builds on success and momentum is generated.

Envisioned this way, successful issue resolution also creates accessibility to government for residents because the responsibility and effort for issue resolution co-evolves from concerns of both the formal governance structure and issues that emerge from the informal networks. This process fosters the needed consciousness and intentional cooperation and collaboration to realize the community's vision and promise. Such action and effort must happen in the spirit of inclusion: a partnership of both formal and informal community leadership through a sense of stewardship by the community. When alignment between intention and action occurs it serves to further reinforce the communities' strengths.

The Working Model of The Grand Valley Vision 20/20 Process is illustrated in Appendix B.

Before the conclusion of this report it is necessary to discuss the significance of the term "bookends" that has appeared several times.

## The Bookends

As most people know, a bookend is a solid structure that supports material that is placed between its ends. Fruita and Palisade are uniquely situated in the Grand Valley to operate as diversified and stable bookends for that portion of the valley located between the two communities. This concept arose from a conversation in which it was pointed out that Grand Junction has a dominant position in the valley but, "really Palisade and Fruita serve as book ends to the valley. They represent beginnings and endings of the valley". This also fits in a natural sense, in that the Book Cliffs are a real and dominant physical feature of the valley.

Viewed this way, one can see the image of a valley that does have a geographic beginning and an end with the communities in between, north/south or east/west, fitting into the space between these bookends. The idea of buffer zones as one of the "books" between the urban area and the bookends takes on a different meaning when thought of this way. Communities should not be pushed (by growth that is hard to absorb at either end) to the degree that there are too many "books" crammed into the shelf and, therefore, the bookends collapse.

With this image there are several things to consider. The bookends, with their similar strengths, can work together to fortify their anchor spots in the valley. Visible connections are already present. The Fruita-based Co-op that owns the hardware business also has a branch in Palisade. The Palisade newspaper recently purchased the Fruita newspaper. Fruit growers from both areas share ideas with one another. Both Fruita and Palisade are trying to be free standing communities making their own contributions to the valley. The mainstay of Fruita has been its agricultural diversification, which is the same for Palisade,

and both have grown their own successful festivals and events. Both communities desire to preserve their rural, small town atmospheres (for Fruita see the Fruita Community Plan: Honor the Past, Envision the Future).

The middle valley of the bookshelf can find strength in what the bookends do for it. They provide the protection of agriculture that the middle valley also wants to enhance and preserve. They provide resources such as grapes, wine, peaches, and events that draw national attention to the valley. The middle valley provides diversified resources, theaters and other amenities, and has greater capacity to absorb growth that otherwise would go to the bookends, keeping urbanization away from Fruita and Palisade by way of helping them preserve their rural quality of life.

These relationships are symbiotic, each tied to the other in a manner that allows change without destroying the character of the place where change occurs. The Grand Valley is the overall umbrella that contains the towns, communities and villages that have discrete and distinct contributions to make to the valley as a vital resource unit.

## **Conclusion**

The Valley Vision 2020 project has been a very dynamic process. People from all walks of life, from homeless people to professionals, have been very willing to share their thoughts about the past, present, and future of their lives in the Grand Valley. These people have also been appreciative of the governments' initiative to gather the information necessary to draft the 2020 Vision. Residents, governments, and organizations have expressed receptiveness to becoming pro-active partners in shaping the valley's future in a way that incorporates the best that they all have to offer. Momentum is gathering and the entire Grand Valley community is poised for action. The valley's future rests on the strengths that have developed over the years and that have supported it up to this point.